

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8145

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0477

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE CRISIS

REF: TEHRAN 362

1. EMBASSY APPRECIATES RECEIVING REPORT CONTAINED IN REFTEL. KAZEM AL-KHALIL IS A LONG-TIME PRINCIPAL DEPUTY OF CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND HAS TREMENDOUS AFFECTION AND ADMIRATION FOR HIM. HIS THINKING AND THAT OF HIS SON, THE LEBANESE AMBASSADOR TO TEHRAN, ARE USUALLY IDENTICAL WITH CHAMOUN'S.

2. REGARDLESS OF HOW ONE VIEWS THE LEBANESE TRAGEDY, MOSLEM VS. CHRISTIAN, RIGHT VS. LEFT OR LEBANESE VS. PALESTINIAN (IT IS A MATTER OF ALL THREE) THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT POLITICAL LEADERS SUCH AS CHAMOUN HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A POLARIZATION OF POLITICAL FORCES THAT MAY HAVE BECOME UNBRIDGEABLE. CHAMOUN'S INTRANSIGENCE IS PARTICULARLY RESENTED BY HIS OPPONENTS BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE AS MINISTER OF INTERNAL SECURITY. RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE PEACE, CHAMOUN, THROUGH HIS OWN PRIVATE MILITIA, HAS BROKEN MORE CEASEFIRES THAN ANY OTHER UNIT ON EITHER SIDE. HIS APPOINTMENT, IT HAS TURNED OUT, WAS SOMEWHAT LIKE NAMING THE VILLAGE ARSONIST AS CHIEF OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.

3. OUR THINKING ON A POSSIBLE APPROACH TO THE SHAH WAS
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BASED ON SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS. THESE INCLUDED CHAMOUN'S

PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SHAH, AWARENESS OF WHAT KIND OF REPORTS ON THE LEBANESE CRISIS AL-KHALIL'S SON MUST BE FEEDING TEHRAN AND FINALLY THE BELIEF THAT CHAMOUN'S THINKING CAN IN FACT BE CHANGED. AFTER ALL, THE SAME TRUSTED DEPUTY KAZEM AL-KHALIL WHO HAS NOW VISITED TEHRAN TO PRESENT CHAMOUN'S PRESENT LINE WAS ONLY TWO MONTHS AGO IN DAMASCUS AT CHAMOUN'S REQUEST TO PROPOSE A SYRIAN-LEBANESE CONFEDERATION, WHILE CHAMOUN'S SONS WERE IN THE STREETS OF BEIRUT EMBRACING THEIR MOSLEM OPPONENTS IN ACTS OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP.

4. WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS WHICH INDICATE SHAH IS PRESSING CHRISTIAN LADERSHIP (INCLUDING PRES FRANGIE) TO MODERATE ITS DEMANDS AND ACCEPT SOME REFORMS DEMANDED BY LEBANESE LEFT. THIS APPEARS TO BE DIRECTION IN WHICH CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IS HEADING, THOUGH VERY GINGERLY. IT MAY BE THAT SHAH IS CAREFUL NOT TO REVEAL EXTENT OF HIS PRIVATE CONTACTS WITH LEBANESE CHRISTIANS TO AMBASSADOR KHALIL.

5. ALL THIS MAKES IT SOMEWHAT LESS URGENT TO APPROACH SHAH, BUT WE SEE LITTLE HARM APPROACH WOULD DO, AND IT MIGHT HELP TO ENCOURAGE HIS EFFORTS marginally.
LAMBRAKIS

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